

The English Cup.

LOWESTOFT v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Lowestoft on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town	2 goals.
Lowestoft	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Daw; Dow and McCardy; Morrison, Stewart, and Ralley; Brown, Brock, Fairgrieve, McInnes, and Eckford.

Lowestoft: Ayres; Mowse and Timoney; Sutherland, Marr, and Burrows; Wilkins, Allan, Watt, Cole, and Crews.

Referee, Mr. H. C. Platt; linesmen, Messrs. A. Plaster and A. Fisher.

Yes, dear reader, Luton have won the first match they have been asked to play in the English Cup Competition for this season, and I am thankful for it. Why? do you say; hadn't I any faith in the team? Yes, I have a lot of faith in the team, but this was just one of those particular matches where form is upset, and where a surprise is likely to occur. There is never any accounting for English Cup form, and my remark is confirmed when I mention that last Saturday South Shore beat Newton Heath by 3—1, then New Brompton went to Plumstead and drew with the Arsenal 1—1, and again Stockport drew at Glossop 2—2, whilst Jarrow actually sold their chance—apparently—by taking an offer to play at Middlesbrough instead of at home, and there surprised even themselves by winning by two goals to one, and McCartney's team—Barnsley—beat Lincoln City at Lincoln by 1—0.

Lowestoft was the most unfortunate draw Luton could possibly have had. A long railway journey sandwiched between the outing to Middlesbrough and Gainsborough was not pleasant for the players, whilst the directors knew there was no prospect of a decent gate; in fact, Luton's share of the gate was not sufficient to pay the expenses there and back. The team left on Friday and stayed at the Harbour Hotel, a most comfortable place. It was pouring with rain when they arrived, and the prospects of a fine day for Saturday were remote. However, it cleared up and the morning was quite summer-like. The players took advantage of strolling through the fish markets for a couple of hours, and were amazed at the tons of fish being brought out of the smacks which had just come into the harbour.

Luton played the same team that did so well at Middlesbrough, although it was doubtful right up to ten minutes before the start whether Billy Stewart would play or not. However, he did so, and won the toss when the game started. It was of no great advantage to the side, but when Billy is successful with the coin, it is always worth chronicling. The weather began to look dull about two o'clock, and the crowd never reached a thousand spectators. The gate was £31, and although we were told in the London papers last week they expected a £100 gate, the secretary informed me it had realised more than he had expected.

To detail the match is a most difficult task, for it amounts to one continual repetition. The features of the whole game can be described in three lines. It was a case of Luton attacking eighty minutes out of the ninety, and corner following corner without success, Luton scoring once in each half, half an hour from the commencement, and an exhibition of the weakest refereeing it was possible to witness. But more anon. Here you have the whole news in a nutshell, but perhaps my readers expect these incidents detailed more minutely.

Watt kicked off, and in the opening few minutes the locals got down towards the Luton goal. Dow mis-kicked through slipping, and Lowestoft quickly took advantage of it. They raced away towards Daw, and eventually Stewart conceded a corner, which was placed behind. Luton took up the running from this point, and with three exceptions the Lowestoft forwards never carried the ball over the half-way line in a combined run, and only once was the ball put past Daw's touch-line. Of course, at times the leather reached Dow and McCardy, but it was only through long kicks.

In the opening five minutes McInnes appeared to get right through and looked certain to score, but Tommy's final effort went just by the post. Luton next forced a corner, which was placed by Eckford, and it was only through a clever bit of clearing by the seagiders' goalkeeper that Luton failed to get the lead. The game was one continual attack by Luton. A pretty run by all the forwards was neutralised by Brock being given offside just as he had the goal at his mercy, but the decision of the referee did not meet the approval of the players or myself. Following a foul against Luton, the visitors again attacked, and after forcing a couple of fruitless corners, Ralley missed by inches.

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Continuing the pressure, Brock got in a grand shot which the goalkeeper saved very smartly, although fortune favoured him, for I don't think he knew he had saved it. Luton put in at least ten shots that either went just by the post or just over the bar. Once or twice they ought to have scored, for the players were in good positions, and after making all allowances, it must be said that the shooting was execrable. Corners were coming with persistent regularity, and off one of these Eckford placed right back to McCurdy, who put in a long dropping shot, which Stewart headed, and Fairgrieve headed again into the net, but the point was disallowed for offside.

This continual pressing by Luton did not have its effect until play had been in progress half-an-hour, and then Eckford scraped a shot just in the corner of the net from Brown's centre. It was evidently Luton's intention to keep the pot boiling, for straightaway from the kick-off they came again into Ayres' quarters, and he was forced to concede another corner. A little bit of vicious work on the part of Marr "marred" his play, and the referee had to award him a word of caution. Other corners followed, but to no good purpose, and when the interval arrived Luton were still leading only by one solitary goal.

To comment on the second half simply means a repetition of the above. In the first minute Luton gained a corner, and then Ayres made a lovely save at close quarters, whilst McInnes followed this up by hitting the post. Five minutes after the re-start play had to be stopped for a couple of minutes owing to Brock getting his leg hurt, but he was soon all right again. Morrison next tested the goalkeeper with a long shot which he threw away. A mighty shout from the nine hundred spectators greeted the fact that Lowestoft had broken away and forced a corner. This was placed behind, and so was another which they got a few minutes later.

A pretty run by Luton took the ball to the other end, and then Eckford, just as he was going to shoot, was tripped in the penalty line, but the referee had rules of his own, and only allowed a free kick, which eventually went behind. Two minutes later Fairgrieve looked a certain scorer, for he got right past the backs, and then shot over the bar. Again Luton hit the post, the ball rebounding into play. Next Ralley put in a terrific shot, which the goalkeeper saved at the expense of a corner. It was a fine shot, and fully deserved to score, for it was undoubtedly the best of the match.

Ten minutes from the finish Luton got their second goal off a foul at close quarters, McInnes putting on the finishing touch. With the exception that each side forced a corner which was abortive, nothing further of note took place, and Luton retired victorious by two goals to one.

It was a very poor game from a spectator's point of view. From start to finish Lowestoft were completely outclassed, and if Luton had won by ten goals it would not have more than represented the difference between the teams. As I have already said, Luton did all the attacking, and it was only the luck of the considerable defence, coupled with erratic shooting by Luton, that the score did not reach double figures. I need not remind the forwards of the bad shooting; they have expressed their own opinion on it already. With this exception—and remember this is one of the chief things that makes a good footballer—all the forwards did very well, and showed some clever work at times. The halves were in splendid form. Stewart's leg did not affect him as much as I thought it would, whilst Morrison was at his best, and Ralley played a capital game. He only needs encouragement to make a tip-top player. Dow and McCurdy were as safe as a rock, and kicked well and with judgment. Daw's display was beyond reproach. He only made one mistake, and that was in going down to Lowestoft, for considering that he never had a shot to handle throughout the game, and only one came within a dozen yards of him, he could easily have been left at home.

Lowestoft are a team that are all right in their own class, but their class is not Luton's, and I am sure if we had played a team that was four times as good we should have won by a larger margin. Luton did too much pressing to score many times, for all ground shots cannoned off someone, and the high shots either went over the bar or the goalkeeper saved.